DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 449 077 SO 032 442

AUTHOR	Myers, Erin
TITLE	Celebrating Mexico. Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminars Abroad Program, 2000 (Mexico and Guatemala).
SPONS AGENCY	Center for International Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2000-00-00
NOTE	34p.; Because of faint type, several pages of the document may not be reproducible.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Area Studies; *Art Activities; *Curriculum Development; Elementary Education; Foreign Countries; *Social Studies
IDENTIFIERS	Celebrations; *Dia de los Muertos; Fulbright Hays Seminars Abroad Program; Historical Background; Mexican Arts; *Mexican Culture; Mexico

ABSTRACT

This curriculum unit introduces students in grades K-8 to an important Mexican holiday, the Day of the Dead (November 2). The unit provides an overview of the celebration and is divided into two lessons: (1) "Classroom Altar" (with seven typical art and food preparation activities); and (2) "Day of the Dead Procession" (with five arts and crafts activities). Each activity gives complete step-by-step instructions on how to make the arts and crafts and how to prepare the food, including time allotment, materials needed, anticipatory set, procedure, and resources. (BT)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document

ED449077

Celebrating Mexico

By Erin Myers

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Fulbright-Hays Seminars Abroad Program

Mexico-Guatemala, 2000

SO 032 442

Gale Holdren

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Title: Day of the Dead Celebration

Grade Level: K-8

Subjects: Social Studies, Art, Language Arts

Unit Rationale:

In our ever-expanding world, students will be increasingly exposed to other cultures and traditions. It is our duty as teachers to help our students become more understanding and thoughtful people. By introducing students to the traditions of the Mexican people during one of their most important holidays, students will gain a better understanding of the culture, which they may not come into contact with during the regular course of their lives.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Background Information:

Can you imagine eating candy skulls, spending the night at a cemetery, or preparing special food for a dead relative? These are things Mexican children look forward to on El Día de los Muertos, the day of the Dead. It's not a spooky time, like Halloween. Los Días de los Muertos (November 1 and 2) is a time to celebrate and honor the dead. Ancient Mexicans believed dead people moved on to a different world. Death was another kind of living. Spanish priests, wanting to replace the indígena religion with the Catholic one, tried to stop the people's celebrations for the dead. When that didn't work, they combined the traditions with the ancient Catholic holy days for the dead, All Souls and all Saints Days, on November 1 and 2.

During the last week of October, markets fill with foods, flowers, and toys for celebrating El Día de los Muertos. You can buy pan de los muertos (bread for the dead) or calaveras de azúcar (sugar skulls). Children love to eat them and give them to their friends. As El Día de los Muertos gets closer, homes fill with the smells of chocolate and chiles. Everyone cooks special foods like tamales and chicken mole. They gather the food and flowers they will need to celebrate.

On November 1 and 2, whole families get together to clean and decorate their relatives' graves. They make paths of marigolds or candles to guide the

spirits. They build altars at churches and graveyards. Each altar is different. The family arranges marigolds, candles, incense, and a photo of the dead person on an embroidered tablecloth. They add fruits, flowers, and the dead person's favorite foods. They decorate graves of dead children with sugar skulls, toys, and Mexican chocolate.

On the night of November 1, everyone meets at the graveyard. Many Mexicans believe that spirits return that night to meet with the living. They take food for everyone, including the dead. It is an exciting time...a time to remember aunts and grandparents, a time to feel their presence, a time to be together with all the family, living and dead.

Resource: Piñatas & Smiling Skeletons, Harris and Williams (p. 11)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Outline of Unit:

I. Day of the Dead Celebration

Lesson 1: Classroom Altar

Activities:

1. Paper Flowers
2. Clay Skeletons
3. Pictures of the Deceased
4. Paper Cutting
5. Paper Candles
6. Sugar Skulls
7. Traditional Mexican Foods

Pan de Muertos (Bread of the Dead)

Tamales

Mexican Hot Chocolate

Lesson 2: Day of the Dead Procession

Activities:

1. Clay Skull Necklaces
2. Banner
3. Other Activities

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

a. Face Painting

b. Paper Candles

c. Paper Flowers

Activity #1: Paper Flowers

Description:

Students will make paper flowers to place on the classroom altar.

Time Allotment:

Prep: 10 minutes
Lesson: 20-30 minutes

Materials:

Tissue paper, orange
Pipe cleaners, green
Scissors
Posterboard arch
Cardboard box, covered in butcher paper

Anticipatory Set:

The teacher will put a paper-covered box in a corner of the room with a posterboard arch completely enclosing the box. The teacher will not mention this box to the students until it is time for the lesson. Students will most likely be curious about its presence and ask questions about it. This will help the students become excited about the lesson to come.

When it is time for the lesson, the teacher will gather the class on the rug and explain the Day of the Dead holiday and the purpose of the altar. The teacher will then show the class examples of Day of the Dead altars. The book, The

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Skeleton at the Feast, is full of excellent color pictures of altars. There are several websites that also have beautiful pictures of altars.

Procedure:

1. The teacher will model one form of paper flower construction. Be sure to encourage the class to be creative in forming their flowers. Many students will have previous experience in making flowers and they can help other students who may have less experience.

2. The teacher will attach the completed flowers to the posterboard arch so that the posterboard is completely covered.

Resources:

Books: The Skeleton at the Feast, Carmichael

Piñatas & Smiling Skeletons, Harris and Williams

Websites: www.mexonline.com/daydead.htm
www.azcentral.com
www.mexconnect.com/mex_/muertos.html

Activity #2: Clay Skeletons

Description:

Students will use clay to create skeletons similar to those traditionally made in Mexico.

Time Allotment:

Prep: 30 minutes
Lesson: Day 1: 40-50 minutes (clay)
Day 2: 20 minutes (washing)
Day 3: 25-30 minutes (paint)
Day 4: 15-20 minutes (glue)

Materials:

Clay skeletons from Mexico or teacher-made examples
Pictures of clay skeletons
Crayola Wet Set™ clay or other self-hardening clay
Paper cups (one per student)
Tap water
Tempera paint (white, black, other colors)
Small and large paintbrushes (one per student)
2"x 2" squares of posterboard or cardboard (one per student)
Rubber cement

Anticipatory Set:

The teacher will show the class several examples of clay skeletons from Mexico, or, if none are available, teacher-made examples and pictures from books. The teacher will explain to the class that the skeletons are supposed to be humorous, not scary. Examples might include a skeleton playing a guitar, male and

female skeletons in wedding clothes, a doctor skeleton or a dog skeleton.

Encourage the class to be creative during the skeleton construction phase of the lesson.

Procedure:

Day 1:

1. The teacher will gather the class on the rug and demonstrate how to make clay skeletons. The teacher will start with the skull, then show the class how to make the body, arms and legs. It is a good idea for the teacher to practice making skeletons beforehand.

Notes:

- Remember to blend the joints together so that when they are dry, the extremities will not break off.
- Make sure the skeleton is no more than 3" high.
- If the skeleton can stand while still flexible, it will be able to stand when dry.
- Add eyeholes to the skull using the tip of a pencil.

2. Give students 40-50 minutes to create their own skeletons. After students have completed their skeletons, place them in a paper cup and cover completely with tap water. Leave them in the water overnight.

Day 2:

1. Remove the skeletons from the water and wash gently with warm soapy water. The students can do this themselves if provided with small tubs of soapy water and large paintbrushes. After washing, have students rinse skeletons with fresh water and place on paper towels to dry overnight.

Day 3:

1. Have students bring their skeletons to their desks. Have tempera paint ready on their desks. Students will each need a small, fine paintbrush and a larger one.

2. Students will paint their skeletons, starting with the large brush and white paint. Instruct students to begin with the skull and move on to the rest of the body. If students want to add clothing, they may do so, using a different color of paint. After a few minutes, the white paint will dry, and students can use the fine paintbrush to add black to the eyes, mouth, nose and any other bones they would like to add.

•Note: This is an excellent review activity for units about skeletons, body parts or bones.

Day 4:

1. Help students glue their skeletons to a piece of posterboard or cardboard. Have students hold their skeletons upright while the glue dries.
2. When dry, place the skeletons on the altar.

Resources:

Books: The Skeleton at the Feast, Carmichael

Website: www.mexconnect.com/mex_muertos.html

1. Remove the skeletons from the water and wash gently with warm soapy water. The students can do this themselves if provided with small tubs of soapy water and large paintbrushes. After washing, have students rinse skeletons with fresh water and place on paper towels to dry overnight.

Day 3:

1. Have students bring their skeletons to their desks. Have tempera paint ready on their desks. Students will each need a small, fine paintbrush and a larger one.

2. Students will paint their skeletons, starting with the large brush and white paint. Instruct students to begin with the skull and move on to the rest of the body. If students want to add clothing, they may do so, using a different color of paint. After a few minutes, the white paint will dry, and students can use the fine paintbrush to add black to the eyes, mouth, nose and any other bones they would like to add.

- Note: This is an excellent review activity for units about skeletons, body parts or bones.

Day 4:

1. Help students glue their skeletons to a piece of posterboard or cardboard. Have students hold their skeletons upright while the glue dries.
2. When dry, place the skeletons on the altar.

Resources:

Books: The Skeleton at the Feast, Carmichael

Website: www.mexconnect.com/mex_muertos.html

Activity #3: Honoring the Dead

Description:

Students will draw pictures of people who have died to place on the classroom altar, as is traditionally done in Mexico.

Time allotment:

Prep: 5 minutes
Lesson: 25-30 minutes

Materials:

3" x 5" rectangles of white paper or blank index cards (one per student)
pencils
tape
colored pencils

Anticipatory Set:

The teacher will place a photograph of a deceased person on the altar the morning before this activity. Students will most likely begin asking questions about who the person is and why their picture is on the altar. The teacher will explain to the class that the picture is of someone who has died and that the picture is on the altar so that his or her life might be celebrated. The teacher will explain that in Mexico, people put pictures of their dead relatives on altars for the same reason. According to tradition, the spirit of the deceased person will return on the Day of the Dead to spend time with the family and to enjoy a meal with them.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Procedure:

1. Give each student a 3"x5" piece of white paper or a blank index card.
2. Instruct student to draw a picture of someone in his or her family who has died. This can include a grandparent, cousin, friend, pet, etc.
3. After students are done drawing, have them color their pictures with colored pencils.
4. Students should then tape their pictures to the front of the altar.
5. Students should be encouraged to bring in actual photographs of loved ones who have died to place on the classroom altar.

Activity #4: Papel Picado (Mexican Paper Cutting)

Description:

Students will learn a simplified version of the traditional art of Mexican paper cutting.

Time allotment:

Prep: 45 minutes
Lesson: 50 minutes

Materials:

Tissue paper squares (10" square) in a variety of colors
String (10 foot lengths)
Scissors (one pair per student)
Glue sticks
Optional: patterns

Note: These supplies can be found in a kit sold by Hearthsong (1-800-325-2502). The kit includes 70 sheets of pre-cut tissue paper in assorted colors, one pair of craft scissors, a glue stick, 25 yards of colored string, four trace-and-cut patterns and instructions.

Anticipatory Set:

The teacher will bring in pictures of cut paper and examples of professionally cut paper. If traditional papel picado can't be found in a local paper, art or craft store, the teacher can use the pattern from the kit or create their own pattern to use as examples.

The teacher will explain to the class how papel picado is used to decorate during celebrations in Mexico. Structures of all kinds are hung with papel picado, including homes, churches, restaurants, telephone poles, altars, etc. They are used for Saints Day celebrations, Christmas, the Day of the Dead, birthdays, weddings and many other holidays.

Procedure:

1. The teacher will demonstrate how to create papel picado, following these steps:
    a. Select one piece of tissue paper.
    b. Fold accordion-style three times lengthways, so that the paper is evenly divided into four sections.
    c. With the paper still folded, cut along three sides of the paper, removing small pieces so holes are left in the paper. Make sure not to cut 1/2 inch on one end.
    d. Encourage students to be as creative as they like. Make scalloped or zigzag edges; cut half circles, half hearts, diamonds, half-stars, long cuts, etc.
    e. When finished, open up paper and show the class the pattern of cuts.

f. Lay one piece of string on the rug. Place uncut edge of paper under string.

g. Put glue along the top edge of the paper.

h. Fold the top edge of the paper over the string so that it sticks to itself.

2. Students are instructed to create their own papel picado.

3. In grades 4-8, patterns may be used. In this case, fold the paper in half, placing the pattern edge on the folded edge of the paper. Trace the pattern, then remove. Cut along the traced lines. Finish by gluing onto string.

4. Allow students to glue their paper onto the string by reminding them to leave several inches of space between each paper so that they may flow freely.

5. Students should be allowed to make several, if time permits.

6. Hang the completed paper string along the wall of the classroom or in the hallway of the school.

• Note: Caution children not to jump up and touch the paper, as they rip easily.

Resources:

Books: Mexican Papercutting, Trenchard

Kit: Hearthsong (1-800-325-2502)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Websites: www.hearthsong.com

Activity #5: Paper Candles

Description:

Students will make paper candles to place on the classroom altar.

Time allotment:

Prep: 15 minutes
Lesson: 20 minutes

Materials:

Origami paper (3"x 3") in a variety of colors or
Plain white copy paper
Scissors
Glue
Yellow or orange paper
Tape
Pencils
Markers

Anticipatory Set:

The teacher will show the class pictures of many different Day of the Dead altars. The teacher will point out the presence of candles in each altar. The teacher will explain to the class that, traditionally, candles are lit and placed on an altar so that loved ones can find their way back to the land of the living to spend time during the Day of the Dead celebration.

Procedure:

1. The teacher will demonstrate how to make candles using the following steps:

a. Select one piece of origami paper or plain white copy paper. If using white copy paper, the paper must be folded in half and cut along the fold.

b. Draw and color a picture on the paper. The theme of the drawing should include one or more of the following: skeletons, crosses, flowers, skulls, or saints.

c. Roll the paper into a tube and secure it by gluing one edge of the paper to the other.

d. Using the yellow or orange paper, cut out a flame and glue to the inside of the tube so that the flame faces the front of the candle.

e. Tape the bottom of the tube to another piece of paper so that it stands up like a candle.

f. Place the candle on the altar.

Resources:

Books: Day of the Dead, Hoyt-Goldsmith

The Skeleton at the Feast, Carmichael

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Activity #6: Sugar Skulls

Description:

Students will learn to measure ingredients in order to mold traditional sugar skulls.

Note: Sugar skulls are for decoration only. They are not to be eaten.

Time Allotment:

Prep: 30 minutes
Lesson: Day 1: 30-40 minutes
Day 2: 30-40 minutes

Materials:

Skull mold
Granulated sugar (1 c. for two skulls)
Meringue powder (1 t. for two skulls)
Mixing bowl
Tap water
Cardboard pieces, 3"x 3" (1 per student)
Watercolor sets (1 per student)
Cups of water
Measuring cups and spoons

•Note: The skull mold and meringue powder can be found in Sur la Table (1-800-243-0852), an ethnic supplies catalog, for a reasonable price.

Anticipatory Set:

The teacher will show the class pictures of traditional sugar skulls and then show them examples of the completed sugar skulls that they will be making.

Procedure:

Day 1:

1. The teacher will go over the instructions for creating sugar skulls. The teacher will put the instructions on the overhead projector and help the class read them together.

a. The teacher will lead the students in putting together the mixture.

b. Students will take turns pressing the sugar mixture into the mold and inverting the skull onto a piece of cardboard.

c. Students will let the skulls dry overnight before adding decorations.

Day 2:

1. Model the painting of the sugar skulls with a small paintbrush and a set of watercolor paints. Encourage students to be creative.

2. Let students paint the skulls using watercolor paints.

3. Students can add decorations like sequins and feathers if they are available. Glue these decorations on carefully.

Note: The best and brightest colors are made when students use a moderate amount of water. If too much water is used, entire sections of the skull will melt.

Resources:

Books: The Day of the Dead, Hoyt-Goldsmith

Sugar Skull Kit: Sur la Table, (1-800-243-0852)

Websites: www.surlatable.com
www.mexicansugarskull.com

Directions for making Sugar Skulls

1. Put 1 cup of white sugar in a bowl
2. Put 1 teaspoon of meringue powder in the bowl.
3. Mix well with hands.
4. Put 1 teaspoon of water in the bowl.
5. Mix again with hands.
6. Squeeze a handful of sugar mixture to test texture.
7. If you can make a firm ball of sugar, it's ready.
8. Press sugar into skull mold.
9. Scrape back of mold so that it's flat.
10. Put a piece of stiff paper on the back of mold.
11. Flip over and remove mold carefully.
12. Let skull dry overnight.

Activity 7: Traditional Mexican Foods

1. Pan de Muertos

2. Tamales

3. Hot Chocolate

Notes:

- Recipes for pan de muertos and tamales can be found at:

www.SOAR.Berkeley.EDU

- Mexican chocolate can be found at most local grocery stores. One popular brand is Ibarra. Directions for preparation can be found on the package.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Lesson #2: Day of the Dead Procession

Activity #1: Clay Skull Necklaces

Description:

Students will make skull necklaces to wear during the Day of the Dead procession.

Time Allotment:

Prep: 15 minutes
Lesson: Day 1: 45-50 minutes
Day 2: 15 minutes
Day 3: 45-50 minutes

Materials:

Crayola Wet Set™ Clay
Wooden skewers
String
Small paintbrushes
Cups of water
White and black tempera paint

Anticipatory Set:

The teacher will come into the classroom wearing a skull necklace. If the teacher does not have a skull necklace from Mexico, he or she will need to make a sample necklace. The teacher will give the students background knowledge about the procession to help them understand the purpose of having a parade on the Day of the Dead.

Procedure:

Day 1:

1. The teacher will direct the students in making clay skulls. Students will need to make around 25-30 skulls, which are about the size of grapes.

a. Take a small chunk of clay and roll around it around between your palms.

b. Poke a hole through the entire ball of clay with a small wooden skewer or other long, thin object and check to make sure that the hole will be big enough to thread a piece of string through.

c. Poke holes in the skull for eyes.

d. Put the completed skull in a cup of tap water.

2. Leave skulls in the water overnight.

Day 2:

1. Have students dump the water out of the cups and clean the skulls off with soapy water and a large paintbrush. Rinse skulls with fresh water.

2. Place the skulls back in the cups and let them dry overnight.

Day 3:

1. The teacher will instruct the students to paint the skulls with white tempera paint. The paint will dry in a few minutes, and then students can

paint the eyes, nose and mouth with black tempera paint. Let the skulls dry. This should take no more than 10-15 minutes if a medium to thin layer of paint is used on skulls. Using excess paint will cause the paint to remain wet longer.

2. Students will take a length of string 2 feet long and proceed to string their skulls on it. Be sure to tie a knot at one end of the string before beginning.

3. When done, tie the ends of the string together.

4. Students can wear their necklaces when they parade through the school on November 1st and 2nd.

Resources:

Books: The Day of the Dead, Hoyt-Goldsmith

Activity #2: Day of the Dead Banner

Description:

Students will make a banner to carry through the school during their Day of the Dead procession.

Time allotment:

Prep: 5 minutes
Lesson: 20 minutes

Materials:

Large black butcher paper
White tempera paint
Large paintbrushes

Anticipatory Set:

The teacher will show the class pictures of a traditional Day of the Dead procession. Pictures can be found in books and on the Internet. The teacher will remind the class of the purpose for the procession.

Procedure:

1. The teacher will lead a brainstorming session with the class in order to decide what symbols and text should be painted on the banner. Text might include: "Day of the Dead, 2000" or "Día de los muertos." Pictures might include skulls, crosses, flowers, skeletons or other appropriate symbols.

2. The teacher will help students decide who should paint the text and who will be responsible for other symbols. Students should be sure to give each other enough room to paint so that they do not crowd each other and cause accidents.

3. The teacher should place the paper on the floor or on tables. Students should then be allowed to paint the banner with white paint and paintbrushes.

4. When the banner is dry, tape yardsticks to each end to hold onto during the procession.

Resources:

Books: The Day of the Dead, Hoyt-Goldsmith

Activity #3: Other Activities

1. Face Painting

a. This activity should be done on the day of the procession.

The teacher will show the students how to use chalk to paint their faces to look like skeletons. The teacher will wet a piece of white chalk and apply it to his or her entire face. After applying the white chalk, the teacher will apply black chalk around his or her eyes, nose and mouth. Students should be given time to paint each other's faces to look like skeletons for the Day of the Dead procession.

2. Paper Candles

a. During the procession, students should carry their candles in their hands, pretending that they are real candles.

3. Paper Flowers

a. During the procession, two students should carry the flower arch around as in a traditional procession.

•The class should proceed to walk through the school and/or community, holding their candles and the banner. The teacher may let the students play musical instruments such as drums, tambourines and recorders, if appropriate. The procession may end at the altar, and the food may be eaten at that time.